

House Republican Press Release

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A Critical Time for the State of Connecticut and Its People



By Toni Boucher

State Representative, District 143

Our beloved state is facing a crisis. Both the Republican and Democratic caucuses of the Connecticut House of Representatives have decided to form a 10-person bipartisan committee of its peers to examine if the acceptance of gifts by Governor John Rowland has compromised the Office of Governor, and to determine if these actions rise to the level of proceeding with an impeachment trial. The Governor is also the subject of a Federal Investigation. I have been asked to attend a special session of the legislature on January 26, 2004 to cast a vote to create this special bipartisan committee. From the feedback I have elicited and received from my constituents to date, I plan to vote in favor of a fair and just investigation. This is the first time in the history of our state that this action is being considered. Unlike the national constitution, the state constitution is vague on the question of what is an impeachable offense. The offense does not necessarily have to be criminal in nature but could be a pattern or practice of corruption or abuse of power of the Office of the Governor.

Should the Governor choose to continue the process by refusing to step aside, here is a brief synopsis of the mechanics of how the impeachment process would proceed: The committee would establish standards for impeachable offenses. Once established, witnesses would be called to testify before the committee and a recommendation made by the bipartisan panel to the full House. The House would vote on the articles of impeachment by a simple majority. It should be noted that the 10-person committee may or may not find just cause to proceed with the writing of articles of impeachment. If the articles of impeachment are passed, the Governor would step aside and the Lieutenant Governor would run the state during the trial. A trial would then take place in the Senate with each of the 36 Senators serving as jurors. The Chief Justice of the Connecticut Supreme Court would preside over the trial in the Senate. After hearing all the testimony, a 2/3 vote by the Senators would decide if the Governor should permanently be removed from office.

As we navigate through uncharted territory there is much to consider. First, what will be the standards for impeachment- a pattern of conduct or criminal indictment? If it is

conduct, then should all members of the General Assembly be held to the same standard? If so, should they all be subject to impeachment? Second, will the process be drawn out for political advantage in the next election cycle? This could be seen by some as a once in a lifetime opportunity conveniently provided by the unyielding position of a sitting Governor to the opposition party. Undoubtedly, national attention will continue to focus on our state over the next several months as we move through this painful process.

A time like this causes me to reflect on my years of public service - Wilton Board of Education Chair, Member of the State Board of Education, Member of the Wilton Board of Selectman and Member of the Connecticut House of Representatives. I have been afforded by you a rare privilege and extraordinary opportunity to represent the people of Wilton and Norwalk. Over the course of this time, I have experienced some very proud moments of achievement. I have also experienced some very disappointing and troubling moments, but none such as this. Even the acrimonious and partisan budget process of the last 2 years does not compare to the depths of this historic situation.

On a personal level, the situation is literally breaking my heart, especially in how it may affect the children of our state. I have mentored and urged many students to get involved in the democratic process and put the “good” in good government. To them I say that all politicians are not like the ones that make negative headlines. They make the news because they are not like the majority. Most elected officials work hard and care deeply about the job they have been entrusted to do and respect the office they hold.

So many of you have called, e-mailed or written me with your thoughts and have asked me to speak on your behalf. For that I am grateful. This issue has become so pressing that over the past week I held a series of meetings in my home with over 70 past, present and future members of the Republican Town Committee represented. It is important to note that some of the people participating in these meetings were the same people who had been instrumental in placing Governor Rowland in his position of power. There is a strong feeling of betrayal and outrage within this group. I was impressed by the numbers in attendance and the thoughtful discussions that ensued.

Below is the letter I have sent to the Governor representing the content of those meetings. Two main points were reached by a consensus and unanimously directed to the Governor’s attention. 1. The focus for them was about ethics and honesty and not about criminal action or indictments. 2. It was not one political party versus another but about upholding the credibility of the Office of the Governor, whoever might occupy it.

January 16, 2004

The Honorable John G. Rowland
Governor
State of Connecticut
State Capitol
Hartford, CT 06106-1591

Dear Governor Rowland:

It is with great sadness that I write this letter. I have been asked to inform you of the unanimous conclusion of both the Republican and Democratic Town Committees of Wilton. These conclusions were reached in separate deliberations.

After many long, thoughtful and painful discussions both committees have asked for you to resign from the Office of Governor. They feel that by virtue of your own actions and admissions, you have lost the trust and confidence of the people of Wilton. It is an expectation of all voters that the Office of Governor be led by a presence of honesty, integrity and ethical behavior.

They expect this of their local, state and national office holders regardless of party affiliation. For the majority of the citizens the main issue is a matter of your word, not the proving of a criminal act or interpretation of the letter of the law. You have broken the trust of your constituents. Once that bond is broken it can rarely be re-established. They have moved beyond the issue of guilt or innocence in criminal issues to whether you are a man in whom they can continue to place their trust to run this state.

With the approach of the February 4th legislative session, there are critical issues on the table that require the full attention of both sides of the aisle - budget, transportation, education, and environment. It is felt that we will be unable to proceed on the very issues that will allow Connecticut to move forward if you do not step down at this time. Doing so would allow the state to move into the future without the specter of investigative committees. Therefore, I join with my constituents to reluctantly request that you step down. In doing so, I have yet to make any determination regarding a possible vote on impeachment.

General Norman Schwarzkopf remarked, "Leadership is a combination of strategy and character. If you must be without one, be without the strategy".

Thank you for carefully considering the views of my district as you navigate the difficult journey ahead. May God be with you, your family and the people of Connecticut.

Sincerely,

Toni Boucher

Assistant Minority Leader

State Representative, District 143

Below are the Resolutions adopted by the Republican and Democratic Town Committees over the course of the last week.

Republican RTC, Wilton, CT - January 13, 2004

“We have all strongly supported Governor Rowland in the past. Many of us have personally known John and worked with him since the beginning of his public career. We have been grateful for his years of service to the people of Connecticut and the Nation. Based on his own statements, however, we now firmly believe the Governor’s actions have fallen far short of the level of conduct we expect of all public servants, whether at the local, state or national level.

We therefore call on Governor Rowland to resign immediately from the office of Governor of Connecticut. We do not take this step lightly, but we are confident that the desire to serve the people of Connecticut that led Governor Rowland first to seek public office will lead him now to see the necessity of this step.”

Democratic Town Committee, Wilton, CT, January 6, 2004

“Be it resolved, The Wilton DTC abhors Governor Rowland’s blatant abuse of power and calls for his immediate resignation. In the event he refuses to resign, we urge the legislature to conduct a full and fair investigation and, if warranted, initiate impeachment proceedings.